

## CHARITY IN THE MODERN WORLD: A MORAL PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATION.

\*RAJEEV KUMAR,

**ABSTRACT---**This Research Paper is mainly intended to explore the concept of Charity in the modern world. Charity is a universal phenomenon. It has various kinds such as religious, Social and Political. Modern World is the World of Skills, Techniques and Enterprises, as well as of Information, Communication and Technology. The charity is said to be Charity if it is fulfills the need of today and destitute otherwise it is only a showcase.

**KEYWORDS---**Charity, Religion, Economic-Equality, Modern World, ICT, CSR.

**Charity---**Humans are co-existential in nature. There is no human existence without help of each other. Human helps humans in any kind, promotes the sense of living and dignity of mankind. Charity is such an enterprise, in which a wealthy or powerful person gives shelter or something to a needy or group of needy. The word 'Charity' derives from the Latin *caritas* and can be traced the Greek *charis*. In the western religious tradition, charity has become synonyms with the Greek terms *agape*, *philanthropia*, *elemosune* (or *elos*), and even *philia* and *eros*; with the Hebrew words *zedakah*, *gemilut hesed*, and *aheb*; and with the Latin *amor*, *amicitia*, *beneficia*, and *carias* (or *carus*). Charity, the Sanskrit of "*Dana*", means giving away, offering, gift or sacrifices for the welfare of other sentient beings. It can be explained literally as giving the necessities (as robe, alms food, lodgings, medicines etc.) to all sentient beings without discrimination (on the basis of good or bad).

Thus as a theoretical conception, charity has meant both possessive and selfless love, as well as favor, grace, mercy, kindness, righteousness, and liberality. In its

practical application, charity denotes the distributions of goods to the poor and the establishment and endowment of such social-welfare institutions as hospitals, homes for aged, orphanage, and reformatory institutions.

Charity is a universal and continuous phenomenon. Since the beginning of this universe and society charity is prevailed there. Charity are received in different ways by strangers, neighbors, monks, nuns, holy men and women, the displaced, and the poor. Charity may engender affection and gratitude or they might give rise to humiliation and resentment. Charity has different kind based upon the society, religion and political. Important types of charity are given below—

**Religious Charity**---in this almsgiving, begging and charity by the temples, FBO's and others comes.

**Social Charity**---in this category intra-social and inter-social charity comes, where on rich and prosperous man helps the other needy or poor or poor.

**Institutional Charity**---In this category big charity organization, MNCs and so called CSR for society comes.

**Political Charity**---in this category big powerful country provides helps to the poor countries such as Asian and African, so called third world comes.

**International Charity**---in this category organization such as UNO, celebrity's foundations and Church organizations comes.

Thus, Charity is defined as giving voluntarily to those in need. It covers the giving of both money, and of the self through service to the needy. The term is also used to denote an institution or organization, which helps those in need.

**Moral Philosophy of Charity**---Human is full of Compassion. Compassion is the cardinal virtue of human heart. Hence, the concept of Charity arises. Charity comes together with the compassion. Charity means, "Generous actions or donations to aid the poor, ill or helpless" or "Something given a person or persons in need, alms". Charity is the basic and compulsory attribute of every religion. One of the common strains of philosophy for all religions is that of giving. Buddhism refers

charity as, ‘The practice of cultivation of generosity’. In Hinduism it is regarded as Dana and Zakat and Sadqa in Islam.

Applied Moral Philosophy of Charity dealt with the following assumptions or curiosities---

Nature of Charity

Is Charity is right or wrong?

Charity to whom?

Types of Charity

Is Charity relevance in the modern world?

The practice of charity is universally recognized as one of the most basic virtue, a quality that testifies to the depth of one’s Humanity and one’s capacity for Self-Transcendence. Under the influence of the great philosophers Socrates, Plato and Aristotle and the Stoics, Charity was perceived as a duty toward all “*broken and destitute humanity whatever found.*” It was moral and religious obligation, a social and economic need. The Pre-Socratic philosophers had held that justice and equality were principle of divine origin, as had Pythagoras, who stressed equality and harmony in social relationships. “*All human laws are nourished by one, which is divine.*” Writes Heraclitus. There are no political or economic laws, only moral laws. Doing good for the sake of goodness was the only moral ground for charity. A cardinal principle of Greek religion and social thought was that the divinity is good and the cause of good. Plato writes that for “*The cause of evil we must look in other things and not in God*” (Republic 2.18). Neither God nor man can be really good without in some way communicating his goodness to others, Aristotle adds, “*If All men vied with each other in moral nobility and strove to perform the noblest deeds, the common welfare would be fully realized. While individuals also could enjoy the greatest of goods, inasmuch as virtue is the greatest good. Thus “The conferring of a benefit where a return is not sought is morally acceptable, and the value of the gift is not to be judged by the it’s intrinsic worth but by the spirit of one giver.*” Being good meant doing good.

Poverty should not be tolerated. For it leads to the erosion of a democratic state and constitutes the basis of social revolts. Professional begging were banned by Homeric society and Solon’s and Plato’s Athens as well as by Sparta. Nevertheless, poverty was accepted as a fact of life, and charity a means for its relief. The Greek

invoked curses upon men “*who failed to provide water for the thirsty, fire for anyone in need of it, burial and direction for a stranger.*”

Charity in Christianity is synonymous with *agape*, or love. Whether it was a new commandment, as Christ had taught that ‘*Charity is the will of God*’, an act of propitiation to a means of eternal reward, a social obligation, and an act of righteousness. The motives are selfless altruism, desire for fame, inner satisfaction, or desire to imitate the divinity. Byzantine society, its government and church, made charity a major concern and established numerous institutions for sick, orphans, widow, indigent, and others in need of realization and assistance. Charity is also a cardinal feature of modern Christian society, which is guided by the church.

The Buddha’s Four Noble Truths inherently include love and compassion toward fellow human being. Buddhism sees suffering as a universal reality, but a reality with a cause. Suffering may be relieved through the application of four principles: *metta* or *maitri*, loving-kindness actively pursued; *Karuna*, compassion, Mercy, which does not repay evil with evil; *mudita*, a feeling of approval of other people’s good deeds and *Upekha*, equanimity or avoiding the unwanted factors. These principles find their expression in works of social welfare, including public works projects and the maintenance of hospitals and shelters or hospices.

The meaning of Charity in Hinduism depends upon the interpretation of *Dharma*. The primary virtue of the active life of Hindu. *Dharma* is the inner disposition and conserving idea, while the action by which it is realized is known as *karma*, which is expressed in physical, verbal, and mental forms. The physical forms consist of good deeds such as hospitality, duties to wife and children, and assistance to those in need. Verbal charity is identified with proper or gentle speech and courteous behavior. Mental charity is synonymous with piety. Hinduism has given a primary position to personal ethics. And the Upanishads clearly indicate that each person is responsible for his economic or social condition. If individuals are moral and perfect and economically safe, society will ultimately be perfect, thus personal charity is enjoined to a degree that makes organized charity unnecessary.

Charity in Islam depends on the belief in an omnipotent God, master of mankind, which not only receives God’s mercy but is always in danger of incurring his wrath. Thus mankind needs to serve God by means of good works, including

almsgiving, both voluntary offering (*Sadqa*) and legally proscribed ones (*Zakat*), kindness, and god treatment of parents, orphans, and the elderly. Charity should be given freely and disinterestedly by the donor, yet should simultaneously inspire reciprocation by the recipient.

The point is that charity is a cornerstone doctrine of each religion, because all religions are made for wellness of human through the different ways. All the religions promote charity as a means that the service of humanity is the service of God.

**Moral Psychology of Charity**---Charity is a psychological process in which a person get satisfies his ego and mental level through the giving something to others. By giving something to other needy or poor, or helping others takes countless forms, from giving money to charity to helping a stranger dig his car out of the snow, and springs from countless motivations, from deep-rooted empathy to a more calculated desire for public recognition. Our temporal possessions are of three kinds: those necessary for our lives and those of our dependents; those necessary for maintaining our station in life; and superfluous goods/expendable

income. When our neighbors need for necessary goods exceeds his ability to provide, charity demands that we assist him from our superfluous goods/expendable income. In cases of grave necessity, when this is not enough to satisfy his needs, we should not hesitate to share even from goods necessary to maintain our state in life. However, even superfluous goods need not be given in exceedingly large quantity. The law of Moses prescribed a formal system of tithes, under which the people of Israel were commanded to set aside 10% of all their produce to be given as an “offering to the Lord”—for use (at least in part) for the support of the poor and needy—this is arguably one of the earliest formal systems of charitable giving. Many Christians and Jewish people continue to follow this principle that 10% of one’s income is given to charity. The concept of *Zakat*, under which Muslims set aside 2.5% of their wealth each year for needy causes, stands in the same moral tradition. However, clearly many people give to charity for reasons completely unconnected to religion.

Ritual obligations also call forth charity. Entry into ritual spaces often entails passing through the gates of charity. The ritual calendars in many of the world’s religious traditions build ritual almsgiving into festival occasions; the hungry know

a meal may always be had during Lent and Easter, the Jewish holiday of *Purim*, the Buddhist celebration of *Vesak*, and the Muslim *Id al-Adha*. They might also gather at sacred sites where pilgrims are compelled to be free with alms: supplicants await at the banks of the Ganges in Varanasi to offer themselves as auspicious occasions for pilgrim's devotion. Institutionalized ritual practices, such as the passing of the collection plate during the weekly service, ingrain routine patterns of giving.

Manusmriti or Dharmashashtra define charity as a practice of virtue. Compassion and assistance to others in need is a highly cherished value. According to Manusmriti while business and industry were encouraged, earning wealth had to be subject to dharma and unfair dealings had to be banned. Charity is an important part of one's dharma (religious duty). Charity is inextricably linked to the eternal law, duty, conduct, behavior, morality and righteousness. The four primary objectives in the practice of Dana or charity are—

**Punya**-Merit, the polar opposite of Paap or sin which helps us attaining moksha or liberation.

**Prayaschita** - Act of repentance, compensation and confession by a religious or social sinner. This is the second most important philosophical motive behind Dana in India. This could take on the form of monetary taxation or performance of rituals, community feast and giving alms to the poor.

**Aparigriha**-Non-accumulation of wealth; living with bare essentials. This is most difficult to follow and is practiced by spiritual people and those who have renounced the world.

**Karuna** - Compassion for the poor and destitute.

Of the four, Punya and Prayaschita imply self-interest (therefore motivating individuals to donate), whereas Aparigriha and Karuna imply selfless duty towards others.

Man is a social animal, so he cannot live without society. Now different religions, whether, heavenly or man-made, and all social systems came forward to teach him as to how to live with peace, harmony and respect with others. Charity moulds the

individuals into responsible and caring persons. It inculcates the spirit of goodwill, cooperation and brotherhood in upholding social solidarity in the society.

**Charity and Modern World**---Modern world is the world of skills, knowledge, technology and innovations; where everyone is capable to earning their livelihood. In such a condition, the concept of charity seems to fail. Charity should be based only on the ‘principle of need’ and the ‘principle of rationality’. Only worthy and needy should be benefited. As Vedic concept of worthy (Patra) holds that the charity is a sacred process in which the persons of three types comes; i. Patra or worthy, ii. Apatra or not worthy, and iii. Kupatra or bad worthy. The only and only Patra (Worthy) should be benefited. Professional begging should not promoted under the sense of charity.

Second thing is that charity gives a sense of inactiveness in the people. In the poor and developing countries, people don’t want to work, they only seek towards the charity; when the aid comes and they will be benefited. As a result, they became slave of charitable trust or country. And consequently a sense of slavery comes

through the sense of inactiveness; and a society or country becomes a slave of another society or country. In the modern times, charity is proved as a tool of slavery, or they enslave the masses.

But there are some good things of charity also. Charity gives relief, shelter and condolence in the time disaster. In the time of Tsunami, Flood and Epidemic; where a huge amount of people affected; there charity helps in any way, anyhow, is good to society. Charity is both the boon and the curse. Charity is said to be a boon if it implies on Patra (worthy) otherwise it is only a showcase. ‘Help to Real Destitute’ should be motive of charity. In the modern world a charity is called to be rational and logical if it fulfills the following assumptions or postulates---

- The prevention and relief of poverty,
- The advancement of education,
- The advancement of health or savings of lives,
- The advancement of citizenship or community development,
- The advancement of arts, heritage or science,
- The advancement of environmental protection or improvement,
- The advancement of animal welfare, and
- The advancement of human rights, promotion of religious or racial harmony.

These factors make a specific image of charity in the modern world. Because man encounters with these problems and these are co-related to the human existence. Charity with rationality and dealing with these factors is a demand of this world. If something not happens like that then charity has no sense of logic and humanity. Otherwise, It will be only a showcase.

**Conclusion---**Charity is the central idea of each society and religion. Human helps human. It is true that God made man with the free-will and accountability towards the fellowmen charity makes a sense of co-existence among the people, based upon the social and economic level. Although social and economic equality is not completely possible; but something may be. Charity should be impartial, free from selfishness and to the needy. Charity should not be a tool of slavery or conversion. Charity for humanity's sake only. Rational charity is the demand of the modern time and modern world, because a very big portion of the Globe still comes under the "Destitute" and they are our fellowmen.

© CCCTA



## REFERENCES

Mircea Eliade (1987), *The Encyclopedia of Religion Vol. 3*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Smith Adam (1761), *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Robert L. Payton & Michael P. Moody (2008), *Understanding Philanthropy: Its Meaning and Mission*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Buhler G (1886), *The Laws of Manu---Dharma Shashtra* (Tr.), Oxford: Clarandon Press.

Hindery, Roderick (1978), *Comparative Ethics in Hindu and Buddhist Traditions*, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas.

Nath Vijay (1987), *Gift System in Ancient India: A Socio-Economic Perspective*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.

© CGCTA